

Message Text

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ACTION OFA-01

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P R 231430Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6985

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, PFOR, PLOS, US, TP

SUBJ: GSTP COMPLAINTS ABOUT U.S. FISHING FLEET ACTIVITIES

SUMMARY: GSTP HAS COMPLAINED ABOUT SERIES OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING U.S. TUNA FLEET, INCLUDING FISHING IN TERRITORIAL WATERS AND UNAUTHORIZED OVERFLIGHTS BY SUPPORTING AIRCRAFT. WHILE REPETITION OF INCIDENTS COULD SERIOUSLY TROUBLE EMERGING USG-GSTP RELATIONSHIP, NOTE ALSO PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. FLEET TO SEEK MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AGREEMENT WITH GSTP. ACTION REQUESTED: BOTH DEPARTMENT AND ABIDJAN PASS INFORMATION TO COMPANIES AND FLEET AGENT RESPECTIVELY. END SUMMARY.

1. GSTP NOTE DELIVERED HERE OCT 21 STATES THAT U.S. FISHING BOATS HAVE FOR SOME TIME OPERATED IN STP TERRITORIAL WATERS WITHOUT OBTAINING REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION, AND THAT AIRPLANES SUPPORTING THESE BOATS HAVE CONSTANTLY OVERFLOWN SAME WATERS, LANDED AT SAO TOME AND FLOWN EXTREMELY LOW OVER PARTS OF SAO TOME ISLAND. NOTE ADDITIONALLY COMPLAINED THAT TWO U.S. FISHING BOATS PERMITTED TO LAND AT SAO TOME ("DENISE MARIE" OCT 12 FOR ENGINE REPAIRS AND "HORNET" OCT 16 TO PUT ASHORE SICK CREWMAN) ON CONDITION THAT CREWS BE BACK ABOARD BY NIGHTFALL, APPARENTLY TRIED TO SEND CREW ASHORE AT NIGHT. EMBASSY'S ATTENTION CALLED TO ABOVE EVENTS AS CONTRARY TO SPIRIT OF STRICT RESPECT FOR INDEPENDENCE AND SOVER-

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EIGNITY THAT GSTP WOULD LIKE TO CHARACTERIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN

TWO COUNTRIES. NOTE ENDED WITH REQUEST THAT EMBASSY TAKE ADEQUATE MEASURES TO PREVENT RECURRENCE OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS AND WITH EXPRESSION OF HOPE THAT EMBASSY WOULD UNDERSTAND (PRESENT SITUATION).

2. EMBASSY DELIVERING REPLY TO GSTP CHARGE IN LIBREVILLE OCT 23 WHICH A) EXPRESSES REGRET AT ANY INCIDENTS WHICH MAY HAVE OCCURRED; B) REQUESTS INFORMATION FROM GSTP CONCERNING ITS LAWS REGULATING FISHING OPERATIONS IN WATERS UNDER ITS JURISDICTION AND PROCEDURE FOR AMERICAN COMPANIES TO FOLLOW TO DISCUSS FISHING IN THESE WATERS WITH GSTP; AND C) PROMISES TO INFORM U.S. TUNA FLEET AND OWNER COMPANIES OF GSTP'S PROTEST AND TO DO WHATEVER ELSE POSSIBLE TO PREVENT FUTURE INCIDENTS.

3. COMMENT: INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY ABOUT TUNA FLEET ACTIVITIES SUGGEST GSTP COMPLAINTS ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY VALID. RESENTLY 36 U.S.-FLAG TUNA BOATS OPERATING IN WEST AFRICAN WATERS, BELONGING PRINCIPALLY TO FOUR U.S. CORPORATIONS: (STARKIST, VAN CAMP, DEL MONTE AND ZAPATA OCEAN RESOURCES). FROM HOME BASE IN MAYAGUEZ, P.R., BOATS OPERATE PRIMARILY OFF COASTS OF ANGOLA, CONGO, GABON, CAMEROON, AND NIGERIA AND IN WATERS AROUND ISLANDS OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE AND ANNABON AND FERNANDO PO, SEEMINGLY PAYING LITTLE ATTENTION TO TERRITORIAL SEA OR FISHING ZONE CLAIMS. ONE FISH-SPOTTER AIRPLANE (AERO COMMANDER, REGISTRY N57278, BELONGING TO UNITED RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF LAFAYETTE, LA.) IS FLYING REGULAR SUPPORT FOR U.S. TUNA FLEET, OPERATING OUT OF ABIDJAN, LIBREVILLE, SAO TOME AND POINTE NOIRE. TUNA FLEET EXPECTED REMAIN OFF WEST AFRICA UNTIL DECEMBER AND THEN MOVE ON TO PACIFIC.

4. EMBASSY BELIEVES INCIDENTS INVOLVING FISHING FLEET OFFER BOTH THREAT TO DEVELOPING USG-GSTP RELATIONSHIP AND AT SAME TIME POSSIBILITY FOR MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION. IF INCIDENTS REPEATED, THEY COULD PLAY INTO HANDS OF ELEMENTS WITHIN GSTP WHO APPEAR HOSTILE TO ANY CLOSE TIES TO U.S., AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE USED BY THESE ELEMENTS TO STIR SUSPICION THAT FISHING OPERATIONS ARE IN SOME WAY COVER FOR INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.

5. ON OTHER HAND, GSTP HAS ALREADY EXPRESSED TO US (LIBREVILLE 1644) DESIRE TO REACH AGREEMENT FOR JOINT VENTURE WITH OCEAN- FISHING FLEET WHICH WOULD PROVIDE STP WITH REVENUE AND JOBS. GSTP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WOULD PRESUMABLY BE WILLING TO OFFER IN RETURN EXCLUSIVE FISHING RIGHTS IN STP WATERS AND USE OF SAO TOME AS CENTRALLY-LOCATED BASE FOR OPERATIONS IN AREA NORMALLY FISHED BY U.S. FLEET.

6. FROM OUR LIMITED VANTAGE POINT, TREND APPEARS TO BE TOWARD GRANTING BY AFRICAN LITTORAL STATES OF EXCLUSIVE FISHING RIGHTS IN ZONE WHICH LOS NEGOTIATIONS SEEM LIKELY TO EXTEND OUTWARD TO 200 MILES FROM COAST. GABON, FOR EXAMPLE, IS ESTABLISHING JOINT VENTURE

WITH FRENCH TUNA FIRM AND STRENGTHENING ITS NAVY TO POLICE GABONESE WATERS AGAINST "FOREIGN BOATS THAT STEAL OUR FISH". IF THIS TREND CONTINUES TO DEVELOP, U.S. FISHING FLEET MAY FIND ITSELF BLOCKED FROM WEST/CENTRAL AFRICAN OPERATIONS UNLESS IT TOO REACHES AGREEMENT WITH COUNTRIES SUCH AS STP WHILE OPPORTUNITY STILL OPEN.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT INFORMING U.S. FIRMS LISTED PARA 4 ABOVE OF GSTP COMPLAINTS REGARDING FISHING WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION IN TERRITORIAL WATERS AND OTHER INCIDENTS. COMPANIES SHOULD BE ASKED TO INSTRUCT THEIR CAPTAINS TO AVOID REPETITION OF SUCH INCIDENTS, AND SHOULD ALSO BE SOUNDED OUT ON THEIR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS WITH GSTP POSSIBLE JOINT VENTURE OPERATION (NOTING BOTH ADVANTAGES OF SAO TOME AS HOME PORT AND POTENTIAL LOSS OF FISHING AREAS CITED PARA 7).

8. FOR ABIDJAN: WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR PASSING SAME INFORMATION ABOUT GSTP COMPLAINTS TO RAY ZIDI OF SOGIP (TELEPHONE 32-22-12), WHO IS AGENT FOR FLEET, AND ASK HIM TRANSMIT SUBSTANCE TO TUNA BOAT CAPTAINS AND AIRCRAFT COMMAND PILOT MANFREDO SAMS. (ABIDJAN IS PRIMARY WEST AFRICAN BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR FLEET AND ITS SUPPORTING AIRCRAFT.)STEIGMAN

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